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## Letter dated 7 March 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The pogroms of Armenians in Sumgait 17 years ago have the dubious honour of being the first time that ethnic cleansing was utilized in what was still a Soviet space.

From 1988 to 1990, the deliberate manipulation of the Azerbaijani public led to the massacres of Armenians in three of the largest cities of Azerbaijan, Sumgait, Kirovabad (Ganja) and Baku. On 27 February 1988, Azeris went on a three-day rampage in Sumgait, an industrial town 20 miles from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, murdering members of the town's large Armenian minority, looting and destroying their property. The events were preceded by a wave of anti-Armenian statements and rallies that swept over Azerbaijan in February 1988. Most of the victims were burnt alive after being assaulted and tortured. The murderers enjoyed total support of the Azerbaijani authorities and full freedom in committing these inhuman acts against the Armenian population. The peak of the atrocities committed by Azeri perpetrators occurred from 27 to 29 February 1988.

I will refrain from giving a detailed historical overview of the pogroms in Sumgait, as the international community and the United Nations, in particular, have been duly provided with documented evidence circulated through documents on the occasion of the anniversaries of the Sumgait tragedy, the latest ones being A/57/742-S/2003/233 and S/2004/168.

I would only state that the international community's response to these horrific events was explicit. On 7 July 1988, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the massacres in Sumgait, which read:

> "The European Parliament, ...
>
> "B. having regard to the historic status of the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabakh (80 % of whose present population is Armenian) as part of Armenia, to the arbitrary inclusion of this area within Azerbaijan in 1923 and to the massacre of Armenians in the Azerbaijani town of Sumgait in February 1988,

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"C. whereas the deteriorating political situation, which has led to anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait and serious acts of violence in Baku, is in itself a threat to the safety of the Armenians living in Azerbaijan,

"1. Condemns the violence employed against Armenian demonstrators in Azerbaijan;

"2. Supports the demand of the Armenian minority for reunification with the Socialist Republic of Armenia

"...

"4. Calls also upon the Soviet authorities to ensure the safety of the 500,000 Armenians currently living in Soviet Azerbaijan and to ensure that those found guilty of having incited or taken part in the pogroms against the Armenians are punished according to Soviet law."

The Sumgait events were organized with a view to hushing up and concealing the Nagorno Karabagh problem. While the population of Nagorno Karabagh, after 70 years of unlawful subjugation to Azerbaijani rule, raised its voice in peaceful demonstrations for the legally and universally recognized right to self-determination, thus choosing the democratic, constitutional and peaceful path to the exercise of its right, the response of the Azerbaijani authorities was pogroms and killings of Armenians. The premeditated killings in Sumgait were to transform the problem of Nagorno Karabagh from a peaceful and democratic process into a violent confrontation, which turned into one of the world's bloodiest ethnic conflicts after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Azerbaijani leadership, then and now, never expressed remorse over the ethnic cleansing and massacres of the Armenians of Azerbaijan or the Armenians of Karabagh. In fact, the Azeri leadership encouraged the ethnic cleansing and massacres of the Armenians of Azerbaijan, directly and indirectly, through creation of a conducive environment for violence and impunity for such crimes. According to Ilias Izmailov, Azerbaijan's Prosecutor General during the Sumgait pogroms, "Perpetrators of the pogroms now carry mandates and sit in the Parliament" (*Zerkalo*, 21 February 2003).

Exaltation of impunity continues today when, after the vicious act in Budapest, where an Armenian officer was brutally murdered in his sleep through axing by a young Azerbaijani officer at a NATO "Partnership for Peace" training programme, so-called "committees for the support" of the Azerbaijani military officer have been created in Azerbaijan and the perpetrator of a cowardly act is, right before our eyes, being transformed into a hero.

This could not but raise concerns over the increase of aggressiveness in Azerbaijani society as a result of such encouragements, distortions and exaggerations, in short, effective hate propaganda by the top leadership. President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly told his nation that Azerbaijan could launch a new war in Karabagh: "At any moment we must be able to liberate our territories by military means. To achieve this we have everything ... Under these circumstances we cannot react positively to those calling us to compromise", he stated in an effort to justify continued Azerbaijani efforts to abort the Minsk process (source: *Zerkalo*, 23 July 2004). To continue his President's lead, the Azeri Defense Ministry spokesman Colonel Ramiz Melikov stated recently: "In the next 25 to 30 years there will be no

Armenian state in the South Caucasus ... I believe that in 25 to 30 years these territories will once again come under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction" (source: *Zerkalo*, 4 August 2004).

This makes it evident that Azerbaijan is ready to throw the 13-year-long efforts of international mediation away and to threaten the peace process and the relative stability established 11 years ago with a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, at every step Armenia has demonstrated its willingness and readiness to cooperate, wherever possible, and to work towards finding a lasting solution to the Nagorno Karabagh conflict. The latter is possible only through reduction of tension and discontinuation of hate propaganda, which will make the public susceptible to peace.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 163, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Armen **Martirosyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative